



Embassy of the United States, Addis Ababa

Volume 8, Issue 15

April 13, 2006

Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

INSIDE

A Time For Commitment And A Time For Engagement

The following is a transcript of remarks made by U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Ambassador Vicki J. Huddleston at a press conference with journalists on April 5, 2006, Addis Ababa.

"Thank you all for coming today. It is really kind of you and I apologize that it has taken us a while, me in particular, to get back with the local press and have a good conversation.

I think the reason that I really wanted to meet with you today is to tell you that I think that right now is an extremely important time. As you saw in the testimony of our

Deputy Assistant Secretary Ambassador Don

and because it is a crossroads, we believe that



Chargé d'Affaires Ambassador Huddleston (third from left) at the press conference

Yamamoto, he said that he believes that Ethiopia is at a crossroads. I think we all believe Ethiopia is at a crossroads,

now it is time for commitment, and it is time for engagement. Engagement and commitment

(Continued on page 2)

Battling the Stigma of HIV/AIDS



With funding for a small business, Tadeleu keeps busy with orders on her self-powered sewing machine.

Providing hope and support for HIV affected women

Challenge

Several years ago, a young mother in Ethiopia named Tadeleu contracted HIV from her husband, who later passed away from the disease. Her two children, who are HIV negative, live with her mother. She tells of the stigma she faces, both emotionally and socially. "When I found out I had

(Continued on page 3)

African issues

U.S. Commits \$92 Million More To Prevent Famine in Horn of Africa (P 3)

U.S. Sees Significant Human-Rights Gains in Sub-Saharan Africa (P 4)

Charles Taylor's Arrest "Great Moment" for International Justice (P 6)

U.S., Starbucks, Rwanda Coffee Partnership Equals Success (P 7)

American News

White House Issues Fact Sheet on Immigration Reform (P 8)

Americans Demonstrate Across the Country Over Immigration Reform (P 10)

U.S. Launches Major Fight Against Immigration Document Fraud (P 11)

State Department Explains Visa Process for Entertainers (P 12)

Aid Increase Would Boost Nations' Self-Sufficiency, Rice Says (P 13)

Sesame Street Educates and Entertains Internationally (P 14)

International issues

United States Supports Human Rights and Democracy Worldwide (P 15)

United States Will Not Seek Human Rights Council Seat (P16)

Rumsfeld Dismisses Reports of Plans To Attack Iran (P 17)

Health News

Global Access to HIV Therapy Tripled in Two Years, UNAIDS Says (P 18)

Human Toll Rises with Avian Flu Deaths in Egypt (P 20)

Researchers Study Enzyme That Might Lead to New SARS Drugs (P 21)

A Time For Commitment And A Time For Engagement . . .

(Continued from page 1)

ment for sustained development, and for multi-party democracy.

That commitment means a commitment to all voices being heard in the Parliament, and full participation of the opposition in the Parliament; that means full commitment to institution building, which includes a more open Parliament, a discussion of Parliamentary rules, a review of the media; we are bringing in an international team under USAID auspices, at the request of the government to look at the draft press law, so I am sure that is of considerable interest to all of you, and to compare it with international standards and recommend how the press can become more responsible and more open, both of which are very important.

Also the process is now ongoing of reviewing the National Elections board (NEBE) in the expectation that it will be an improved Board that will ensure free, fair, and transparent elections in 2007. We also believe it is a time of commitment and engagement for the opposition to take control of the city of Addis Ababa. They were elected to this city, they need to lead this city. The city should be in the hands of those who were elected to lead it.

We believe this is a time when all parties, government and opposition, should commit to dialogue, to reconciliation, and to the improvement of human rights and respect for human rights. We believe this is a time in which there is an opportunity for the opposition CUD to once again have a political vehicle that will take it to the elections and give it effective representation in the Parliament and in the City

Council, by forming the CUDP.

So there is a lot afoot, and a lot that is possible, if there is engagement, if there is commitment on all parties to participate fully in the democratic process, in the political process in Ethiopia.

A top priority of the United States Government remains the release of the CUD and civil society leaders who were imprisoned following the civil disobedience and the riots in November 2005. We will not forget them, we are extremely concerned about their situation. We have repeatedly talked to the government and called for their release. We have been told by the government that they will stand trial. Given that this is the position of the government, we strongly urge reduction of trial, a reduction of charges, the possibility of bail, and a speedy, fair, and transparent trial. We also urge that any persons in jail who have not been charged be released, and that the security forces take care to respect the rights of each individual and to never use excessive force in the detention of individuals or in their attempts to control demonstrations.

Now, is the time to put the past behind. We believe that the EPRDF won the elections; the Carter Center said that the elections were generally credible. We believe that the opposition, as Ambassador Yamamoto said, lost seats in the complaints process and should have had more seats in Parliament, but it did not win the majority. We believe that the opposition gained an enormous voice, first of all a voice and a right to run and to manage and to lead this great city where you have

the African Union, and the United Nations resident, as well as many, many representatives of foreign countries; and the right to have a significant voice in a free parliament and in the direction of the nation.

Last night I was at a talk at which the World Bank Resident Representative here in Addis was speaking. He was asked whether or not it was true that Ethiopia is progressing economically. He said this was true. I think this is so important. This is why the country is at a crossroads. There is improvement in education, there is improvement in health, the birth rate is coming down, there is a real possibility that Ethiopia can become a true leader for Africa, if it dedicates itself as a united country, to eradicate poverty, to jump onto the tide of change that brings true democracy, respect for human rights, and sustained development.

I think back to one of my favorite Bible verses, a Psalm which was read at President Kennedy's funeral which says that "there is a time to sow, and there is a time to reap, there is a time to mourn, and there's a time to celebrate." I think that for Ethiopia now, it is a time to move forward, it is a time of commitment, it is a time of engagement, a time of change, and I urge all parties in Ethiopia to take the example of Nelson Mandela, who was imprisoned, but allowed the political process to move forward in his country. And when he came out, he united whites, blacks, and all colored in all parts of the South African nation. I hope this will occur in Ethiopia. Thank you." ♦

U.S. Commits \$92 Million More To Prevent Famine in Horn of Africa

Washington -- President Bush announced April 6 that the United States is committing an additional \$92 million to prevent widespread famine in the Horn of Africa and to diminish the underlying causes of food insecurity in the region.

The amount includes use of funds designated by the U.S. Congress for early intervention to prevent or mitigate the effects of famine, according to a statement by White House press secretary Scott McClellan.

"We commend the governments of Kenya, Ethiopia, and Djibouti for their assistance in the delivery of aid to prevent another catastrophic famine in the Horn of Africa," the statement said.



Sudanese workers unload relief trucks filled with sacks of wheat donated by USAID.

The funds are in addition to more than \$150 million in emergency humanitarian food and nonfood assistance already provided by the United States to the region since October 2005. (See U.S. Aid to Africa (http://usinfo.state.gov/af/africa/aid_to_africa.html).)

"The president calls upon other donor nations to contribute to this

effort," the White House statement said.

Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki said recently that 5 million Kenyans are facing food shortages as a result of failed rains, well above the 3.5 million people being targeted by international aid agencies, according to press reports.

The drought has hit northern and northeastern Kenya and also has affected arid and semiarid

areas of Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Tanzania and Burundi, the reports said. More than 11.5 million people are expected to need food aid in the next six months.

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

Battling the Stigma of HIV/AIDS . . .

(Continued from page 1)

the disease," she said, "all I could think about was how much I hated myself, and I kept denying that I had the disease. I do not want to become intimate with people, because I fear they will find out my status."

Initiative

When Tadeleu discovered she had HIV, she started attending support meetings at the Hope Center, a church-based organization established with help from USAID funding.

She found a sense of community and a program that would change her life. The Center provided skills, training, and start-up capital for her to begin a small sewing business. Now, she is too busy to worry about disapproval from her neighbors. Her buyers are often from markets several towns away, because she does not want to deal with local people. Despite the stigma of living with HIV in Ethiopia, she finds relief in the Hope Center. "I am happy that the church has provided support, she says. "They keep our secrets."

Results

Vibrant fabrics grace the wall behind Tadeleu where she spends each day hard at work from sunrise to sunset at her manually powered sewing machine. Orders come in regularly, giving Tadeleu confidence in her work and a sense of security. Amidst her tears, a smile breaks out, and she says, "This program has given me life." ♦

U.S. Sees Significant Human-Rights Gains in Sub-Saharan Africa

By Charles W. Corey
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Although U.S. initiatives have been responsible for achieving significant human rights gains across sub-Saharan Africa, "serious challenges remain" and "significant violations" of human rights continue.

That is the finding of a State Department report, Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2005-2006, which documents U.S. efforts in sub-Saharan Africa and worldwide. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/Archive/2006/Apr/05-564226.html>).)

The report, released April 5, says that across the political and human landscape of sub-Saharan Africa, the promotion of human rights and democracy has long been the United States' "primary foreign policy objective." Endorsement of good governance, strong diplomatic representation, trade incentives and grassroots programs carry the message of democracy to the village level, it says, adding, "In 2005, these initiatives led to numerous gains throughout the region."

"In the Democratic Republic of Congo, U.S. support to the Independent Electoral Commission helped register 25 million voters across 11 provinces for the country's successful December 2005 constitutional referendum and the presidential election scheduled to take place before June 30, 2006," it said.

Additionally, the report cited U.S. support for national elections in

Liberia, which included strengthening political parties, promoting voter registration and training polling officials.

But despite such accomplishments, the report warns, "serious challenges" remain and "significant violations" of human rights continue in the region.

With regard to Ethiopia, the report warns that following strong gains by opposition parties in parliamentary elections there, the government arrested opposition leaders, journalists and prominent members of civil society. The government of Ethiopia, it says, charged these individuals with



Map of Sub-Saharan Africa

"In Darfur, the Sudanese government, government-supported militia and Darfur rebel movements committed serious human rights and humanitarian law abuses," the report charges. "Violence against women and girls, including widespread rape, were serious problems in Sudan," it adds.

capital offenses ranging from "outrages against the constitution" to genocide.

In Cote d'Ivoire, the report notes, the "political crisis continued" and President Laurent Gbagbo's government made few gains in either peace talks with the rebels or

(Continued on page 5)

U.S. Sees Significant Human-Rights Gains in Sub-Saharan Africa. . .

(Continued from page 4)

preparations for the country's planned 2006 presidential election.

INCENTIVES FOR AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS

To promote human rights in Africa, the United States offered strong incentives for African governments to move toward political openness through the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), "which carries a strong democracy and human rights component and provides significant trade benefits to eligible countries," the report said.

Additionally, it credits the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) with granting substantial assistance to countries that pursued reforms by ruling justly, investing in people and fostering economic freedom. During 2005, 17 African countries qualified for an MCC compact or threshold program.

To promote durable peace and free democracy in Burundi, the report notes, the United States initiated programs to enhance media freedom and freedom of speech and gave significant support to the country's successful 2005 elections.

"With these elections, Burundi became the first sub-Saharan country since South Africa to move from minority rule to democratic majority rule through negotiations and democratic elections," the report said.

The United States also "actively supported peace talks in Sudan that led to the Comprehensive

Peace Agreement, ending 22 years of civil war," according to the report, and continues "to support the formation of the government of national unity, while vigorously pressing Khartoum and rebel forces alike to end the continuing violence in Darfur."

Many U.S. initiatives in sub-Saharan Africa were designed to "chip away at the foundations of totalitarian rule," says the report, to open up political space and to encourage silent voices to speak out.

In Zimbabwe, where "fraudulent senate elections further tightened President Robert Mugabe's grip on power, the U.S. government hosted two conferences that highlighted the lack of press freedom and provided uncensored news to the Zimbabwean public through radio broadcasts of the Voice of America." U.S.-funded nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the report explains, disseminated information on human rights and civil society there as well.

In Equatorial Guinea, U.S. action led to the government's signing of a "social needs fund" to accelerate the investment of the country's vast oil revenues in health, education, women's issues and sanitation. The United States also worked with opposition parties, civil society, youth and media to encourage their participation in expanding democracy and promoting respect for human rights, the report said.

The closest allies of the United States in the struggle to promote democracy and respect for human

rights and workers' rights in Africa are the region's democratic governments themselves, the report stresses. "The United States continues to work closely with freely elected governments everywhere to ensure that human freedom becomes an African reality," it concludes.

The report is submitted to the U.S. Congress by the Department of State in compliance with the fiscal year 2003 Foreign Relations Authorization Act, which requires the department to report on actions taken by the U.S. government to encourage respect for human rights.

This fourth annual submission complements the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2005, and takes the next step, moving from highlighting abuses to publicizing the actions and programs the United States has employed to end those abuses.

The full text (<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/shrd/2005/>) of the report is available on the State Department's Web site.

For more information on the reports and U.S. policy, see Human Rights (http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/human_rights.html).

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

Charles Taylor's Arrest "Great Moment" for International Justice

By Charles W. Corey
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The recent arrest of former Liberian President Charles Taylor marks a "great moment for international criminal justice and the victims who suffered so tragically" under his rule, says David Crane, the former prosecutor for the United Nations Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Speaking at an April 7 session at the United States Institute of Peace entitled "Charles Taylor on Trial," Crane said now that Taylor has been arrested, the rest of the story is going to follow the clearly laid out rules of criminal procedure and evidence. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/af/Archive/2006/Mar/29-802897.html>).)

"It's routine," he said. "We have an indictee. He is charged with 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. He has been arraigned. He has pleaded not guilty. ... The decision now is what to do with him."

The original plan, Crane said, was to move Taylor to the International Court of Justice in the Hague, Netherlands -- to get him out of West Africa and "let the dust settle."

"Over time, all of these tyrants, these warlords, these thugs -- their influence tends to wane. We have seen this ... from [former German Third Reich General Hermann] Goering to [former Serbian dictator] Slobodan Milosevic and [Iraqi dictator] Saddam Hussein

"So that was the original thinking ... ," Crane told his audience. "The

thinking is to go ahead and try the case at the Hague.

"That can be done," he explained. "Article Four of the statute allows for the Special Court to prosecute anyone who bears the greatest responsibility -- pretty much anywhere in the world, wherever it makes sense."

"When you are sitting there trying these guys and you have these people led in missing various body parts and you see one of them point their stump at the accused and say, 'You did this to me' because their hand is missing -- and then walk out proudly with their head held high ..., ladies and gentlemen, ... that is justice," Crane said.

TAYLOR SUPPORTED REBELS, CONDONED BRUTALITY

Taylor was elected president of Liberia in 1997 with 75.3 percent of the popular vote. During his presidency, he continued to battle insurgents who opposed his rule and reportedly began selling arms and other supplies to rebels in neighboring Sierra Leone.

Taylor reportedly traded weapons for diamonds. Meanwhile, the rebels he purportedly aided continued their war against Sierra Leone's government, conducting brutal sweeps through civilian areas, chopping off the arms, legs and noses of thousands of suspected government supporters, including women and children. On June 4, 2003, Taylor was indicted

for war crimes by the U.N. Special Court for Sierra Leone.



Charles Taylor

After Liberia descended into civil war in the early 1990s, widespread fighting began in neighboring Sierra Leone as well, led by rebels who reportedly crossed into the country from Liberia. The fighting grew more brutal over time, with roving bands of rebels often hacking the limbs of civilians in the countryside.

A 1996 peace accord failed to stop the fighting, and war raged in Sierra Leone until troops from the United Nations, Britain and the West African nation of Guinea succeeded in disarming the combatants in January 2002.

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE

Crane said that international criminal justice can be delivered efficiently and effectively in the Special Court for Sierra Leone within a politically acceptable time frame. The court is a joint effort between the government of Sierra Leone and the United Nations.

The former prosecutor called the Special Court for Sierra Leone the world's first "hybrid international war crimes tribunal with a workable mandate." That, he stressed, is the key to the "apparent success" of the tribunal's mandate, to prosecute those with the "greatest responsibility" for committing war crimes.

(Continued on page 22)

U.S., Starbucks, Rwanda Coffee Partnership Equals Success

By Jim Fisher-Thompson
Washington File Staff
Writer

Washington -- Millions of coffee drinkers worldwide and thousands of farmers in Rwanda have been made happy, thanks to a partnership with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) that led giant U.S. coffee retailer Starbucks to market the brand "Rwandan Blue Bourbon" in 5,000 of its shops.

Executives from the Starbucks Company, whose 100,000 employees host 40 million customers a week in 10,800 outlets worldwide, joined USAID officials at the Rwandan Embassy in Washington April 11 for a celebratory tasting of the latest Starbucks "Black Apron Exclusive" specialty coffee from Rwanda.

The coffee arrangement with Starbucks -- sales began in March -- was made possible after USAID partnered with Rwandans to upgrade the coffee-farming and coffee-processing infrastructure in the land-locked Great Lakes country.

Jacqueline Schafer, USAID assistant administrator for the Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade, told the gathering, "We have spent \$10 million in the past five years to promote and develop the Rwandan coffee industry."

She added, "I am particularly pleased because this market-



(Left to right)
**Jacqueline Schafer of
USAID; Rwandan Amb.
Zac Nsenga and Star-
bucks' Alfredo Nuno
toast their partnership,
04/11/06
(Harry Edwards photo)**

oriented partnership has improved the livelihoods of 40,000 [Rwandan] farmers by enabling them to sell a high-value crop."

As part of its five-year project, USAID helped Rwandan farmers build and renovate coffee-washing stations, trained them in "cupping and tasting" techniques, organized cooperatives, furnished financing opportunities and introduced them to U.S. coffee retailers like Starbucks.

"This is a perfect example of a successful [development] partnership, and I hope it becomes a model for other countries," Schafer said.

SUSTAINABLE COFFEE CULTIVATION CREATING SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

Alfredo Nuno, a green-coffee trader [purchaser] for Starbucks, told the embassy gathering that Rwandan Blue Bourbon is a "superior" product that naturally belongs with nine others in the company's Black Apron Exclusive category of premium coffees.

Referring to the ethnic strife that led to the deaths of 800,000 Rwandans 12 years ago, Nuno said: "We look at the future of Rwanda and see that it is bright. We are committed to working with Rwandan producers ... to establish a long-term relationship" and expand their production

into the international market.

Rwandan Ambassador Zac Nsenga also touched on the 1994 tragedy in his country, saying: "This morning's celebration is timely. It is happening at a time when we are in our 12th genocide commemoration. Therefore, we are not only celebrating a success story of a meaningful cooperation ... but also the dividends of reconciliation and stability in Rwanda."

The aim of the growers in Rwanda, said Nsenga, is "to produce sustainable quality coffee in sustainable quantities while maintaining standards. They are looking for lasting partnerships with

Starbucks. In doing this, they aim at achieving sustainable livelihood for their families."

The government of Rwanda is

"determined to create a conducive business environment for this relationship to flourish" and to continue a development strategy emphasizing public-private sector partnerships, said the ambassador.

Nuno explained to the Washington File that the Rwandan product is especially flavorful because it was grown near the equator at relatively high altitude -- 2,200 meters. Coffee can be cultivated between the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn, the trader explained.

For Rwandan Blue Bourbon, "blue" refers to the blue-green color of the unroasted cherries and Bourbon is named after the variety of the Arabica species of coffee plant. ♦



White House Issues Fact Sheet on Immigration Reform

President Bush cited three key elements of his administration's policy toward comprehensive immigration reform in a fact sheet released by the White House on April 8. They are secure borders, stronger law enforcement, and a temporary guest worker program that rejects amnesty while allowing foreign workers to fill jobs no American is willing to do.

Each of the three elements reinforces the others, the White House said, and all are necessary to "give America an immigration system that meets 21st-century demands."

"Through the generations, Americans have upheld that vision by welcoming new citizens from across the globe. Immigrants have helped shape our identity and sustain our economy," the White House fact sheet states.

Bush has called on Congress to increase the number of green cards that can lead to citizenship, and supports increasing the number of visas for foreign-born workers in highly skilled fields, according to the fact sheet.

Following is the text of the White House fact sheet on immigration reform:

Comprehensive Immigration Reform:

Securing Our Border, Enforcing Our Laws, and Upholding Our Values

Presidential Action:

On March 27, 2006, President Bush Attended A Naturalization Ceremony And Discussed His Vision For Comprehensive Immigration Reform.

The President supports comprehensive immigration reform to secure our border, improve enforcement of our laws, and uphold our values. The President also discussed his proposal for a temporary worker program that rejects amnesty, allows foreign workers to fill jobs no American is willing to do, and reduces smuggling and crime at the border.

-- America's Immigrant Heritage Continues To Shape Our Society. Our Nation is bound together by liberty and a conviction that all people are created with equal dignity and value. Through the generations, Americans have upheld that vision by welcoming new citizens from across the globe. Immigrants have helped shape our identity and sustain our economy.

-- The President Strongly Believes America Is Stronger And More Dynamic When New Citizens Are Welcomed. The President has called on Congress to increase the number of green cards that can lead to citizenship. He supports increasing the number of visas available for foreign-born workers in highly skilled fields.

-- The President signed legislation creating a new Office of Citizenship at the Department of Homeland Security to promote knowledge of citizenship rights and procedures; the Office of Citizenship created a new official guide for immigrants, and the Administration is working with faith-based and community groups to offer civics and English-language courses. In July 2002, the President signed an Executive Order making foreign-born members of our military immediately eligible for citizenship. Over the past four years, more than

20,000 men and women in uniform have become citizens.

-- Every New Citizen Makes A Lifelong Pledge To Support The Values And Laws Of America. New citizens have an obligation to learn the customs and values that define our Nation - including liberty and civic responsibility, equality under God, tolerance for others, and the English language.

The President Welcomes A Civil And Dignified Debate On Comprehensive Immigration Reform.

Congress is now considering immigration reform proposals. Immigration is an emotional topic, and we need to maintain our perspective as we conduct this debate.

To Keep The Promise Of America, We Must Enforce The Laws Of America

President Bush's Proposal For Comprehensive Immigration Reform Includes Three Critical Elements - Securing The Border, Strengthening Enforcement Inside The Country, And Creating A Temporary Worker Program.

These elements depend on and reinforce one another. Together, they will give America an immigration system that meets 21st-century demands.

The First Element Is Securing Our Border.

-- Since President Bush took office, funding for border security has increased by 66 percent. The Border Patrol has been expanded to more than 12,000 agents, an increase of more than 2,700

(Continued on page 9)

White House Issues Fact Sheet on Immigration Reform

(Continued from page 8)

agents, or nearly 30 percent. The President's FY07 budget funds another 1,500 new agents. Agents are being provided with cutting-edge technology like infrared cameras, advanced motion sensors, and unmanned aerial vehicles. Protective infrastructure, such as vehicle barriers and fencing in urban areas, is being installed. Manpower, technology, and infrastructure are being integrated in more unified ways than ever before.

-- The Administration's Border Security Strategy Is Getting Results. Since President Bush took office, agents have apprehended and sent home more than 6 million people entering the country illegally - including more than 400,000 with criminal records. Federal, State, local, and tribal law enforcement are working together. More than 600,000 illegal immigrants were apprehended through the Arizona Border Control Initiative last year - an increase of more than 50 percent increase over the previous year. The men and women of our Border Patrol have made good progress - but we have much more work ahead, and we will not be satisfied until our agents have full control of our border.

-- The Administration Is Ending The Practice Of "Catch And Release." The President has set a goal to end "catch and release" over the next year. Most illegal immigrants from Mexico can be returned to Mexico within 24 hours. Non-Mexican illegal immigrants present a different challenge. For decades, government detention facilities did not have enough beds for the non-Mexican illegal immigrants caught at the border - so

most were released back into society. They were each assigned a court date, but virtually no one showed up. The Administration is ending the practice of "catch and release" by increasing the number of beds in detention facilities by 12 percent this year; the President's FY07 budget proposes increasing that number by another 32 percent. The Administration is expanding the use of "expedited removal," which allows us to send non-Mexican illegal immigrants home more quickly.

-- We Are Making Progress In This Effort. Last year, it took an average of 66 days to process a non-Mexican illegal immigrant. Now, the process is taking only 21 days. This has helped us end "catch and release" for illegal immigrants from Brazil, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua caught crossing our Southwest border. Since last summer, the total number of non-Mexican illegal immigrants released into society has been cut by more than a third. There is more work ahead, and the Administration will work with Congress to close loopholes that make it difficult to process illegal immigrants from certain countries and will continue pressing foreign governments like China to take back their citizens who enter our country illegally.

The Second Element Is Strengthening Enforcement Of Our Laws In The Interior Of Our Country.

-- Since President Bush took office, funding for immigration enforcement has increased by 42 percent. These resources have helped agents bring to justice smugglers, terrorists, gang members, and human traffickers. For

example, through Operation Community Shield, Federal agents have arrested nearly 2,300 gang members who were in America illegally, including violent criminals like the members of the "MS-13" gang.

-- Better Interior Enforcement Requires Better Worksite Enforcement. Last year, President Bush signed legislation to more than double the resources dedicated to worksite enforcement. Next month, the Administration will launch new law enforcement task forces in 11 cities to dismantle document fraud rings.

The Third Element Is Creating A New Temporary Worker Program That Would Not Provide Amnesty.

-- A temporary worker program would make the system more rational, orderly, and secure by providing a legal way to match willing foreign workers with willing American employers to fill jobs that no American is willing to do. Workers would be able to register for legal status on a temporary basis. If workers decided to apply for citizenship, they would have to get in line. This program would help meet the demands of our growing economy and allow honest workers to provide for their families while respecting the law.

-- A Temporary Worker Program Is Vital To Securing The Border. Creating a separate, legal channel for those entering America to do an honest day's labor would dramatically reduce the number of people attempting to sneak back and forth across the border. That would help take pressure off the border and free up law enforcement to focus on the greatest

(Continued on page 17)

Americans Demonstrate Across the Country Over Immigration Reform

By Jane Morse
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Tens of thousands of people demonstrated in cities across the United States April 10 to make their opinions heard about immigration reform.

Responding to the public turnout, President Bush described immigration policy as "an important issue that people feel strongly about." He added, "The good thing about a democracy is people can express themselves."

Addressing reporters after a speech he delivered April 10 in Washington, Bush said Americans "ought to be compassionate about this debate...."

Noting that the United States is a nation of immigrants, the president said the country nonetheless must secure its borders and enforce the law. Bush emphasized the need for immigrants to enter the United States legally. "People ought to ... be able to work on a temporary basis, and if they want to become a citizen," he said, "they get in line like everybody else...." (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2006/Apr/10-416654.html>).)

White House press secretary Scott McClellan said there was bipartisan agreement in the Senate to move forward on comprehensive immigration reform adding that immigration reform is "a high priority" for the president.

The president "believes that if we're going to fix the immigration

system, we must do it in a rational and comprehensive way, and that's what he's continuing to advocate," McClellan said.

McClellan said successful legislation would include securing U.S. borders, increasing Border Patrol agents and deploying new tech-

minority leader to let the comprehensive bipartisan agreement move forward.

See also "White House Issues Fact Sheet on Immigration Reform (<http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2006/Apr/10-904894.html>)."



Immigration reform demonstrators finish a march, April 10, 2006, at the Federal Building in downtown Seattle.
(AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)

nologies to prevent the entrance of illegal immigrants.

The president is emphasizing the importance of a temporary guest worker program that "will help relieve pressure off the border and help us do a better job of securing the border by allowing our Border Patrol agents to focus on those who are criminals and terrorists, smugglers and traffickers that are trying come into this country for the wrong reasons," he said.

McClellan said Bush would be urging the Senate and the Senate

For more information on U.S. policies, see Visas, Passports, and Immigration (http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/immigration.html) and Chinese Human Smuggling (http://usinfo.state.gov/eap/east_asia_pacific/chinese_human_smuggling.html).

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

U.S. Launches Major Fight Against Immigration Document Fraud

By Jane Morse
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- U.S. law enforcement agencies are teaming up for an all-out fight against document fraud and immigration benefit fraud.

At an April 5 press conference, U.S. officials announced the formation of multi-agency Document and Benefit Fraud Task Forces in 11 cities: Atlanta; Boston; Dallas; Denver; Detroit; Los Angeles; New York; Newark, New Jersey; Philadelphia; St. Paul, Minnesota; and Washington.

Assistant Secretary for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Julie Myers said the task forces will target both individuals and sophisticated criminal organizations involved in multimillion-dollar criminal schemes to produce and sell fraudulent documents.

Document fraud "has become epidemic in this country," Myers said.

"Millions of illegal aliens have used fraudulently obtained or counterfeit documents to unlawfully obtain employment in the United States," she said. "At the same time, some of these fraudulent documents have helped numerous criminals hide from law enforcement, and the vulnerability created from terrorists who embed themselves into our society and avoid detection is clear."

Myers said criminals increasingly are using new technology, such as advanced computer software and high-resolution digital scanners and advanced printing devices, for document fraud.

In addition, these criminals have operations in every area of the country. In one case in Denver, ICE discovered that fraudulent documents manufactured by a single criminal organization had been found in all 50 states. The high profits from this crime, she added, are tempting professionals such as attorneys, corporate executives, immigration consultants and notaries.

Deputy Attorney General Paul J. McNulty, who also spoke at the press conference, said fake documents allow anyone -- including criminals and terrorists -- to enter and reside in the United States.

"My initial experience with document fraud," McNulty said, "was on the heels of the attacks on America of September 11th, 2001.... (W)e prosecuted four criminals, who for as little as \$100 each, helped 9/11 terrorists fraudulently acquire Virginia identification cards."

Those fake document producers, he said, were in effect helping the terrorists who eventually would hijack Flight 77 and fly it into the Pentagon, killing 189 people.

Asylum fraud, Myers said, "has been abused for years by criminals and terrorists. For example, asylum fraud enabled Ramsey Yousef, the mastermind of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, to enter this country."

The problem is growing, she added. "We know that each year tens of thousands of applications for immigration benefits are denied because of fraud, and those are just the ones we find. Recent

studies indicate that the incidence of fraud in some visa categories is as high as 33 percent."

Director of Citizenship and Immigration Services Emilio Gonzalez emphasized that "the door to the United States of America must and will remain open."

"However, we will diligently guard that door to ensure that no one, and we mean no one, is tempted to take advantage of our hospitality. And if they do, then they should expect to pay the full consequences," he said.

An immigrant himself, Gonzalez said he appreciates the tremendous opportunities that the United States offers. "And today as a naturalized citizen, I lead the largest immigration service in the world.

"But we can never lose sight of the fact that legal immigration to the United States is a highly valued privilege. We must do everything in our collective powers to maintain the trust that we've been given to safeguard that most precious gift."

For more information on U.S. policies, see Visas, Passports and Immigration (http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/immigration.html).

A press release (<http://www.ice.gov/graphics/news/newsreleases/articles/060405dc.htm>) on the new task forces and a fact sheet (<http://www.ice.gov/graphics/news/factsheets/060405fraudfactsheet.htm>) on recent document and benefit fraud investigations are available on the ICE Web site. ♦

State Department Explains Visa Process for Entertainers

Department of State assistance available to entertainers seeking to obtain visas was explained in a media note issued by the department April 6.

"Consular sections around the world go to great lengths to facilitate travel for visiting entertainers," the note says. "We often arrange for entertainment groups to appear outside regular processing hours to streamline processing. In addition, performers can apply at any consular section worldwide, not just in their place of legal residence."

In the fiscal year that ended September 30, 2005, the Department of State issued nearly 44,000 visas for entertainers and artists, many of them expedited to meet performance schedules.

For more information on U.S. policies, see Visas, Passports and Immigration (http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/immigration.html).

Following is the text of the media note:

(begin text)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman
April 6, 2006

Facilitation of Visas for Entertainers

The Department of State has long recognized the importance of cultural exchange and strongly supports the travel of international entertainers to this country. Performances by international artists

provide enriching and rewarding experiences for both American audiences and the visiting entertainers.

Consular sections around the world go to great lengths to facilitate travel for visiting entertainers. We often arrange for entertainment groups to appear outside regular processing hours to streamline processing. In addition, performers can apply at any con-



Ethiopian artists in the U.S.
(photos by- DJ Photography, Washington DC)

sular section worldwide, not just in their place of legal residence.

In fiscal year 2005, the Department of State issued nearly 44,000 visas for entertainers and artists, many of them expedited in order to meet performance schedules. For example, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, we were able to help several large musical groups obtain visas in three days in order to play in benefit performances for hurricane relief. CNN recently reported on a rock band from Iran that participated in the famous South by

Southwest festival in Austin, Texas. The Department of State coordinated the complex visa application process for the band members that enabled them to participate in the festival. Our embassies and consulates in Europe spend significant amounts of time supporting the travel of orchestras and dance troupes from all over the world.

By law, each applicant for a visa, even if part of a larger group, must be personally interviewed and their fingerprints collected. In addition, entertainers require special visas processed on the basis of a petition filed with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS). All 211 of our visa processing offices recognize the importance of processing these visas in a timely fashion, once we receive the approved petitions from USCIS. Our consular officers recognize that managing the personal appearance of all members of a large group can be challenging and work with perform-

ers to help coordinate this process.

All of our efforts to assist international artists are informed by the desire of the United States to welcome entertainers, as we welcome all legitimate international travelers.

(end text)

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

Aid Increase Would Boost Nations' Self-Sufficiency, Rice Says

By Kathryn McConnell
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The Bush administration's \$23.7 billion request to fund foreign operations for the fiscal year that begins October 1 would help developing countries transition to self-sufficiency while continuing to address core development programs in education and child health, says Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Testifying April 4 to a House of Representatives Appropriations subcommittee, Rice said the fiscal year 2007 foreign assistance budget also would support such "frontline states" in the War on Terror as Jordan and Pakistan, as well as aid countries "who wish to have the freedom and liberty" that the United States enjoys.

"If there are well-governed democratic states we will be safer," she said.

The requested amount is 14.25 percent larger than the amount appropriated for fiscal year 2006, not counting supplemental appropriations, said Representative Jim Kolbe, the subcommittee's chair. It supports the 80 percent of official U.S. foreign aid money administered by the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

Rice said that the foreign aid budget would be realigned to avoid duplication of spending and to ensure that all aid programs are "going in the same direction."

The reorganization of foreign assistance planning and execution will be coordinated by Randal Tobias, whom the Senate confirmed

March 29 as the first director of foreign assistance, at a level equivalent to that of the deputy secretary of state.

AIDS RELIEF, MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE ACCOUNT

Under the president's budget request, foreign aid spending in fiscal 2007 would continue to address the global challenge of HIV/AIDS through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) program and bilateral agreements, Rice said. The United States also would build more partnerships to implement AIDS education and treatment programs, she said. (See President Bush's HIV/AIDS Initiatives (http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/HIV_AIDS/hiv_aids_initiative.html).)

The budget request also seeks \$3 billion for the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), which, with the signing of its eighth compact (a multiyear country-specific funding agreement) in March, is now "well under way," Rice said. (See Millennium Challenge Account (http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/mca.html).)

In its four years of existence, the MCC has awarded \$1.5 billion to countries that have demonstrated commitments to policy reforms and expects to award an additional six compacts totaling \$2 billion in the remainder of the current fiscal year, Rice said.

She called the MCC an "innovative program to reward transformational states" that are combating corruption, opening their economies and trying to "deliver the befits of democracy to their people."

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

She said that in fiscal 2007, the United States would continue to enhance its public diplomacy efforts to "engage [people around the world] and get out a message of freedom."

The secretary said that to carry out the president's democracy agenda, some U.S. diplomats will be repositioned out of Europe and into countries such as India and China.

During questioning, Rice said the United States played a major role in helping Liberia achieve democratic change. A few years ago, she said, it was common to see photographs of 14-year-old Liberians carrying guns during the country's civil war and rule by dictator Charles Taylor.

Now Liberia has an elected president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and Taylor is in the custody of a United Nations-supported international tribunal in Sierra Leone, she said. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/af/Archive/2006/Mar/01-62149.html>).)

Additional information (<http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/06feb20061000/www.gpoaccess.gov/usbudget/fy07/pdf/budget/state.pdf>) (PDF, 22 pages) on the State Department's fiscal 2007 budget request is available on the U.S. Government Printing Office Web site.

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

Sesame Street Educates and Entertains Internationally

By Michael Jay Friedman
Washington File Staff Writer

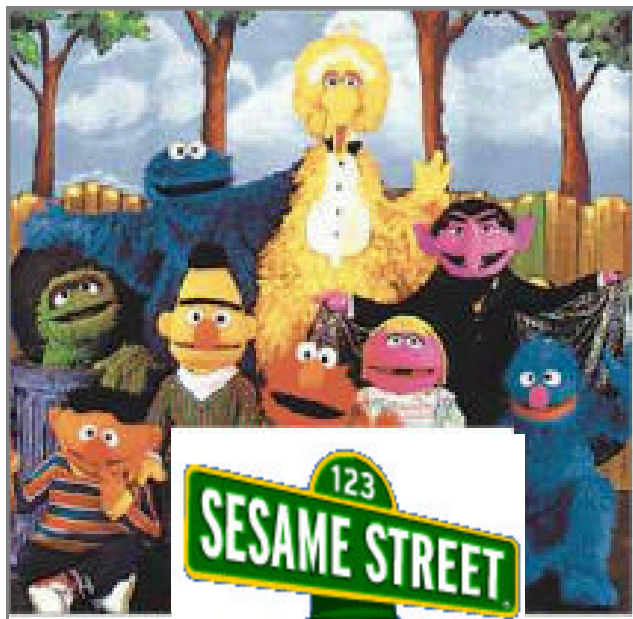
While on his way to Norway to accept the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan stopped off to conduct a delicate mission. A cheerful red monster and his friends could not agree who would sing the "Alphabet Song." Fortunately, Annan's diplomatic skills proved equal to the task, and the dispute was resolved to the satisfaction of all: everybody sang!

The site of the secretary-general's assignment was Sesame Street, where humans, puppets and animated characters teach youngsters their letters and numbers, the days of the week, how to tell time and other valuable skills.

Sesame Street was developed by a team of artists, writers and child development experts at the Children's Television Workshop, a division of National Educational Television, a predecessor of today's Public Broadcasting Service.

The show responded to a 1968 Carnegie Corporation study revealing the long hours that American preschoolers were exposed to commercial television. In May 1969, The New York Times reported that Sesame Street "had the most extensive planning for any television show to date." The workshop tested elements of the show at New York area day care centers, and the only commercials, said the Times, would be "animated spots selling various letters of the alphabet."

Since its first telecast in the United States in September 1969, Sesame Street has evolved into 20 international editions, each with its own unique characters and flavor, and has been broadcast in more than 120 countries, making it the most widely viewed children's television show in the world.



The U.S. version reaches approximately 8 million viewers each week, and has won 97 Emmy Awards (the American prize for excellence in television broadcasting) -- more than any other show.

Sesame Street has expanded from the television screen into books and magazines, licensed products, day care centers and other outreach efforts. What, then, is the secret to its success?

Friendly characters are a big part of the formula. The U.S. cast always has been chosen to demonstrate diversity. Linda, introduced in the late 1970s, was deaf, and

read stories in American Sign Language, while her assistant read them aloud. Luis, who first appeared during the 1971–1972 season, is the longest-running Hispanic character on American television, and African-Americans Gordon (played over the years by three different actors) and Susan appeared in the show from its start.

Over the years, these regulars have been joined by special guests from nearly every walk of life. Prominent figures have ranged from first lady Laura Bush (reading Wubba, Wubba, Wubba to Elmo, Big Bird and a number of children) to activist Ralph Nader, who joined music teacher Bob to perform People in Your Neighborhood. Laura Bush also has appeared on the Egyptian version of Sesame Street.

The Sesame Street Muppets characters were created by Jim Henson (1936–1990) as a combination puppet and marionette. These include such Sesame Street staples as Count Von Count, who counts virtually all objects in his path and presents the "Number of the Day" and friendly blue monster Grover, who, in his new role as "Global Grover," teaches children to accept their differences, as he shows home movies from his many travels.

Among the most popular characters is Elmo, an irrepressible red monster whose explorations of "Elmo's World" includes such regular features as "Ask Mister

(Continued on page 22)

United States Supports Human Rights and Democracy Worldwide

Washington – U.S. efforts to advance human rights around the world are outlined in Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2005-2006, released by the Department of State April 5.

The congressionally mandated annual report, a companion to the State Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, recaps the actions and programs the United States has taken to end human-rights abuses noted in the country reports. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/Archive/2006/Mar/08-930887.html>).)

The report summarizes the U.S. strategy in advancing freedom around the world, so that people will be able to see in one document what the United States is doing to support democracy and human rights, Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Barry F. Lowenkron told the Washington File April 3.

Supporting Human Rights and Democracy addresses U.S. efforts in 95 countries and demonstrates the link between the findings of the annual country reports -- a comprehensive, accurate account on human rights conditions around the world -- and the efforts by the United States to help remedy the human-rights abuses identified in the reports.

The report puts words into practice, an approach that has become a hallmark of U.S. foreign policy in the area of international human rights, according to Lowenkron. In the report, the United States looks at human-rights reporting not merely as a record of past per-

formance but as a guide for future improvement.

The report is the product of cooperation among regional and functional bureaus of the U.S. Department of State and missions abroad, the U.S. departments of Justice, Commerce, Treasury and Labor, and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Congress legislatively mandated that the department report on actions taken by the U.S. government to encourage respect for human rights in countries in which there are incidents of extra-judicial killings, torture or other serious violations of human rights. The publication re-

fects an ongoing dialogue between Washington and U.S. posts overseas to identify promising programs that support the goals of democracy and human rights.

In fiscal year 2005, the United States budgeted \$1.4 billion for human rights and democracy programming. The Millennium Challenge Account, which links a country's eligibility for poverty alleviation funding to good governance, fosters democratic reform efforts through targeted development assistance. (See Millennium Challenge Account (http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/mca.html).)

The report illustrates that U.S. support for human rights and democracy is not a once-a-year task to report on the state of human rights in countries; it is, rather, a day-to-day effort by the United States to encourage countries to build stronger democratic systems and greater respect for human rights, Lowenkron said.



Barry F. Lowenkron, Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor

"What comes through in the report is that there are individual voices in all the 95 countries. Some of these voices are weak; some of them are strong; some of them are stronger. The United States does not 'impose democracy.' We hear these voices, and we try to respond to them," Lowenkron said.

The full text (<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/shrd/2005/>) of the report is available on the State Department's Web site.

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

United States Will Not Seek Human Rights Council Seat

By Judy Aita

Washington File U.N. Correspondent Writer

United Nations -- Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has decided that the United States will not to seek a seat on the new U.N. Human Rights Council, U.S. officials said April 6.

In a statement announcing the U.S. decision, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said: "There are strong candidates in our regional group, with long records of support for human rights, that voted in favor of the resolution creating the council. They should have the opportunity to run."

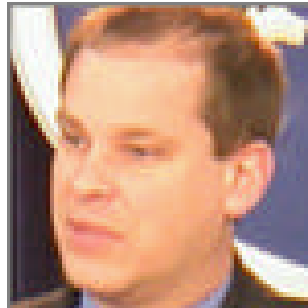
McCormack said that the United States "will actively campaign on behalf of candidates genuinely committed to the promotion and protection of human rights" and also will "actively campaign against states that systematically abuse human rights."

The United States was in the forefront of support for Secretary-General Kofi Annan's 2005 proposal to abolish the discredited Commission on Human Rights and replace it with a strong new body to protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms. But it voted March 15 against the creation of the council, criticizing the criteria for membership as not being strong enough to keep human rights abusers off the council.

However, U.S. Ambassador John Bolton, U.S. representative to the United Nations, pledged support

saying that the United States "will work cooperatively with other member states to make the council as strong and effective as it can be." (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/is/Archive/2006/Mar/16-752125.html>).)

McCormack said that the United States will support the new council "politically, diplomatically as well as financially" and will be an



Sean McCormack
State Department Spokesman

observer. The United States also will encourage the new council to address serious cases of human rights abuse in Iran, Cuba, Zimbabwe, Burma, Sudan and North Korea, he said.

The spokesman said that Rice made the decision in consultation with her advisers and "after a period of reflection on the matter" that "as a matter of fairness" the United States would defer to the other announced candidates in the Western regional group.

Annan was "disappointed" by the U.S. decision, U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said, adding, "The secretary-general very much hopes the United States will be an active 'player' in defense of human rights."

MAY ELECTIONS SET FOR NEW COUNCIL

The General Assembly will hold elections for the first members of the 47-nation Human Rights Council at U.N. headquarters in New York on May 9. Seats are apportioned

to the five regional groups and successful candidates will need the support of an absolute majority of the 191 U.N. member states, or 96 votes.

Candidates are to submit voluntary pledges and commitments on the promotion and protection of human rights. Member states are to take those pledges as well as candidates' human rights records into account when voting.

The first meeting of the Human Rights Council will be on June 19 in Geneva. The council will meet regularly, scheduling no fewer than three 10-week sessions a year and will be able to hold special sessions if needed.

As of April 6, a total of 35 countries had announced their candidacies. There is no deadline for applications, thus countries can submit their names even as the voting begins on May 9.

Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru are seeking the eight Latin American and Caribbean seats. So far, Algeria is the only candidate for 13 African seats.

The Eastern European seats are being sought by 13 countries: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Czech Republic, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovenia and Ukraine.

The full text (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/64182.htm>) of McCormack's statement is available on the State Department Web site. ♦

Rumsfeld Dismisses Reports of Plans To Attack Iran

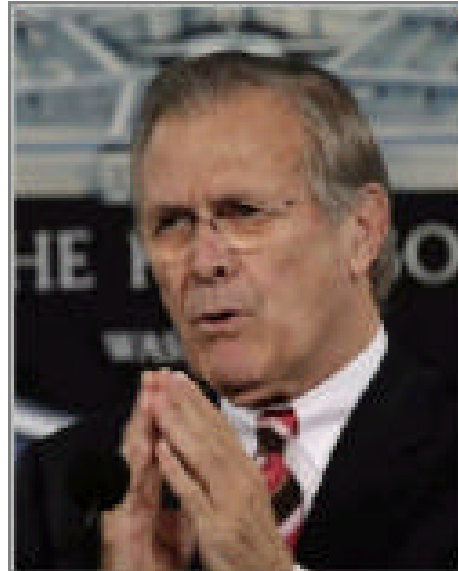
Washington -- The United States and its allies are working toward a diplomatic solution to resolve the ongoing standoff with Iran over its nuclear program, says Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.

"The United States of America is on a diplomatic track. That is the president's decision. That's where our European allies are," Rumsfeld told journalists at an April 11 Pentagon press briefing, where he was joined by Marine General Peter Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Rumsfeld's comments follow several days of media reports alleging that the Pentagon is planning a military strike against Iran's nuclear sites if the Iranian government refuses to cooperate with the international community's demand for full disclosure about its covert nuclear programs. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/is/Archive/2006/Mar/23-457173.html>).)

Rumsfeld said that the Department of Defense continually develops contingency plans, from military action to humanitarian assistance missions, to meet a host of

possible security threats. "I am always thinking that maybe there's something we've not thought of or



Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld speaks at a news briefing at the Pentagon in Washington April 11, 2006. REUTERS/Yuri Gripas

something we could do better," he said.

Reporters asked whether the United States would be able to meet emerging security threats, given the sizeable commitment of

its troops in Iraq. Pace answered that with 2 million active-duty U.S. troops available in addition to those currently deployed in Iraq, the United States has "sufficient personnel, weapons, equipment, you name it, to handle any adversary that might come along."

"There is obviously concern about Iran," Rumsfeld said, "It's a country that supports terrorists. It's a country that has indicated an interest in having weapons of mass destruction." (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2006/Mar/07-398720.html>).)

But, referring to reports that the United States has imminent plans to attack Iran, he said that, "it is just simply not useful to get into fantasyland."

For more information, see Arms Control and Non-Proliferation (http://usinfo.state.gov/is/international_security/arms_control.html) and Response to Terrorism (http://usinfo.state.gov/is/international_security/terrorism.html). ♦

White House Issues Fact Sheet on Immigration Reform. . .

(Continued from page 9)

threats to our security - terrorists, drug dealers, and other criminals. The program would also improve security by creating tamper-proof identification cards that would allow authorities to keep track of every temporary worker who is in America on a legal basis and help authorities identify those who are here illegally.

-- A Temporary Worker Program Should Not Provide Amnesty. Granting amnesty unfairly allows those who break the law to jump ahead of people who play by the rules and wait in the citizenship line. Amnesty would also encourage future waves of illegal immigration, increase pressure on the border, and make it more difficult for law enforcement to focus on those who mean us harm. For the

sake of justice and the sake of border security, the President firmly opposes amnesty.

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U. S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

Global Access to HIV Therapy Tripled in Two Years, UNAIDS Says

By Cheryl Pellerin
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – A new report by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) shows that the number of people on HIV anti-retroviral treatment (ART) in low- and middle-income countries more than tripled, to 1.3 million in December 2005 from 400,000 in December 2003.

Charting the final progress of the “3 by 5” strategy to expand access to HIV therapy in the developing world, the report – Progress on Global Access to HIV Antiretroviral Therapy – also says lessons learned in the last two years lay a foundation for global efforts now under way to provide universal access to HIV treatment by 2010.

Progress in treatment scale-up, while substantial, was less than initially hoped, according to a March 28 UNAIDS press release.

But the report notes that treatment access expanded in every region of the world during the “3 by 5” initiative, with about 50,000 people beginning ART every month in the past year.

Launched by WHO and UNAIDS on World AIDS Day in 2003, 3 by 5 aimed to provide treatment to 3 million people in low- and middle-income countries by the end of 2005.

The ambitious target was based on a 2001 analysis of what could be accomplished with an optimal combination of funding, technical capacity building, health systems strengthening and political will and cooperation.



Drugs have a much greater chance of working if HIV is diagnosed early

The initiative confirmed that HIV treatment can be delivered effectively in a variety of health systems, including those in poor countries and rural settings, and that large-scale ART access is achievable and increasingly affordable.

SCALING UP TREATMENT

Sub-Saharan Africa, the region most severely affected, led the scale-up effort. The number of people receiving HIV treatment there increased more than eight-fold, to 810,000 from 100,000 in the two-year period.

By the end of 2005, more than half of all people receiving HIV treatment in low- and middle-income countries lived in sub-Saharan Africa, up from one-quarter two years earlier.

“Two years ago, political support and resources for the rapid scale-up of HIV treatment were very limited,” said WHO Director-General Lee Jong-wook.

“Today,” he added, “3 by 5 has helped to mobilize political and financial commitment to achieving much broader access to treatment. This fundamental change in expect-

tations is transforming our hopes of tackling not just HIV/AIDS, but other diseases as well.”

In July 2005, the Group of Eight (G8) nations (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States) endorsed a goal of working with WHO and UNAIDS to develop an essential package of HIV prevention, treatment and care with the aim of moving as close as possible to universal access to treatment by 2010.

The new WHO/UNAIDS report outlines steps that must be taken to continue and expand treatment scale up toward this goal.

Countries in every region of the world made substantial gains during the 3 by 5 period in closing the gap between those in need of treatment and those receiving it.

The number of public-sector treatment sites in low- and middle-income countries increased from fewer than 500 providing ART to more than 5,100 operational treatment sites by the end of 2005.

A recent survey showed, for example, that the number of treatment sites in Malawi increased from three in early 2003 to 60, and in Zambia, from three to more than 110 facilities in just more than two years.

MEETING TARGETS

Globally, 18 developing countries met the 3 by 5 target of providing treatment to at least half of those in need by the end of 2005, and are now focusing their efforts on

(Continued on page 19)

Global Access to HIV Therapy Tripled in Two Years, UNAIDS Says . . .

(Continued from page 18)

moving toward universal access to treatment.

Other countries fell short of this target, but lessons learned in expanding treatment access and overcoming critical weaknesses in health systems are informing new initiatives to further scale up HIV prevention, treatment and care services.

Increased ART availability prevented an estimated 250,000-350,000 premature deaths in the developing world in 2005 alone.

Between 2003 and 2005, global expenditure on AIDS increased from \$4.7 billion to an estimated \$8.3 billion.

Significant proportions of this funding were provided by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria and the World Bank.

During the same period, the price of first-line treatment decreased by between 37 percent and 53 percent, depending on the regimen used.

PURSUING UNIVERSAL ACCESS

Important advances in HIV treatment access have been achieved in the past two years, but the report also acknowledges that, despite the efforts of many partners and significant funding from a number of donors, the 3 by 5 strategy fell short of its ambitions.

Obstacles to scaling up HIV treatment and prevention highlighted in the report include poorly harmo-

nized partnerships; constraints on the procurement and supply of drugs, diagnostics and other commodities; strained human resources capacity and other weaknesses in health systems; difficulties in ensuring equitable access;



In 2003, Eleda Mukamurara became the first patient in Rwanda treated with antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) with U.S. Government assistance.

and lack of standardized systems for managing programs and monitoring progress.

"The past two years have provided a wealth of experience and information on which we must now continue to build," said WHO HIV/AIDS Department Director Kevin De Cock.

"We intend to utilize this knowledge to focus future efforts on overcoming persistent challenges and obstacles. It is particularly important that scaling-up HIV prevention, treatment and care services contributes to strengthening of health systems overall."

The new report says WHO and UNAIDS will continue to build on lessons learned, and on the priorities, strategies and partnerships of 3 by 5 in accelerating the AIDS response.

UNAIDS is facilitating the development of nationally agreed plans and targets to move toward universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.

WHO's contribution to realizing universal access will be based on a set of priority interventions in five strategic directions that significantly influence the epidemic in different epidemiological contexts:

- Enabling people to know their HIV status through HIV testing and counseling,

- Accelerating the scale up of treatment and care,

- Maximizing the health sector's contribution to HIV prevention,

- Investing in strategic information to guide a more effective response, and

- Strengthening and expanding health systems.

The press release and the full report in French and English are available on the World Health Organization (<http://www.who.int/hiv/mediacentre/news57/en/index.html>) Web site.

For more information on U.S. policy, see HIV/AIDS (http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/hiv_aids.html).

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

Human Toll Rises with Avian Flu Deaths in Egypt, Cambodia

By Cheryl Pellerin
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The ministries of health in Cambodia and Egypt each have confirmed the death of a young person infected with the H5N1 avian influenza virus, and a nonlethal infection in Egypt, and the Scottish government has confirmed H5N1 in a dead mute swan found in Fife, on Scotland's east coast.

The most recent confirmations bring the total number of human avian influenza cases to 192, including 109 deaths, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

Confirmation of H5N1 infection in Scotland brings to 53 the number of countries that have made official reports of bird flu in wild birds and poultry -- and a cat on the island of Rügen in Germany in January -- to the World Organization for Animal Health since 2003.

AVIAN FLU IN EGYPT

The H5N1 avian flu infection announced April 6 by the Egyptian Ministry of Health is the country's 11th human case, and the death is Egypt's third.

An 18-year-old girl from the Minufiyah governorate, north of Cairo, developed symptoms March 29, was hospitalized April 5 and died April 6, according to WHO.

Tests conducted by the country's Central Public Health Laboratory were positive for H5N1 infection.

The most recent nonlethal human H5N1 case is an 8-year-old boy from the Qaliubiya governorate near Cairo. He is hospitalized in stable condition.

In a pattern similar to that seen elsewhere, all cases have occurred in children and young adults, and all have a history of close contact with dead or diseased poultry.

H5N1 ARRIVES IN SCOTLAND

The Scottish government confirmed April 6 that the first H5N1-infected swan had been found in



the United Kingdom.

A joint statement from the United Kingdom and Scottish Chief Veterinary Officers, released April 6 by the U.K. Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), said tests from the Veterinary Laboratories Agency confirmed that a sample from the swan contained the highly pathogenic H5N1 avian flu virus.

According to news reports, tests are being conducted on another 17 birds from Scotland.

Scottish and U.K. officials said they urgently are assessing the veterinary risk and consulting ornithological experts to consider the

circumstances of the case and determine the level of risk it may pose to poultry and other kept birds.

Scotland's Environment Minister Ross Finnie met with the National Farmers Union (NFU) in Perth, Scotland, April 7 to discuss progress on measures to prevent the spread of the bird flu virus.

"Everybody's wish is that this disease never gets any further," said NFU President John Kinnaird in a statement, "and never gets into our domestic poultry flocks."

He added that the poultry industry was "pulling together" with the Scottish government to minimize the disease's potential impact.

The government has set up a protection zone around Cellardyke, Fife, where the swan was found, in which the movement of poultry and poultry products is restricted, and a surveillance zone in which farms are subject to heightened precautions.

A wild bird risk area also has been declared, in which bird keepers must take measures to separate domestic chickens, ducks and geese from wild birds.

For more information on the disease and efforts to combat it, see Bird Flu (Avian Influenza) (http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/bird_flu.html) </i> .

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Depart-

Researchers Study Enzyme That Might Lead to New SARS Drugs

Washington – Researchers at the University of Illinois-Chicago (UIC) and two other institutions have unraveled the structure of an important new drug target from the virus that causes severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS).

The research was funded by the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases at the National Institutes of Health.

SARS first was reported in Asia in early 2003. Over the next several months, the illness spread to more than 29 countries in North and South America, Europe and Asia before it was contained, according to an April 4 UIC press release.

According to the World Health Organization, 8,098 people worldwide were diagnosed with SARS during the 2003 outbreak; 774 died.

"By unlocking the three-dimensional structure of this enzyme – known as papain-like-protease – we now have a molecular road map to design new drugs that could potentially treat SARS-infected patients," said UIC's Andrew Mesecar, "or perhaps patients suffering from other SARS-related illnesses such as the common cold, bronchitis or pneumonia."

The group, he added, is trying the same approach used to design effective drugs against HIV protease, an enzyme essential for producing the virus. That work has



Dr. Andrew Mesecar

led to the development of new drugs to fight the AIDS virus.

Mesecar said knowledge gained from this new atomic structure -- the first-ever reported on this class of proteases -- has the potential to go beyond the treatment of patients infected with the coronavirus that causes SARS.

Coronaviruses, which produce upper respiratory tract infections, were discovered in the late 1960s. The viruses are responsible for 10 percent to 30 percent of all common colds.

Recently, he said, two new coronaviruses -- NL63 and HKU1 -- were found to cause many cases of severe pneumonia in children and the elderly throughout the world.

The SARS infection begins with a high fever, headache and body aches; between 10 percent and 20 percent of patients have diarrhea and after two days to seven days a dry cough might develop. Most

patients develop pneumonia. The infection spreads by close personal contact, often through coughing or sneezing.

"NL63 and HKU1 infections are severe and often lead to hospitalization," Mesecar said. "It is believed these viruses have been around a long time, but only recently have we developed the technology to identify and detect them."

The SARS outbreak and the scientific community's quick response led to the rapid development of such technology, he added.

The protease enzyme is essential for viral replication and infection of all coronaviruses involved in upper-respiratory infections. Eliminating the enzyme should stop the infection, Mesecar said.

The full text (<http://tiger.uic.edu/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/newsbureau/cgi-bin/index.cgi?from=Releases&to=Release&id=1421&fromhome=1>) of the press release is available at the University of Illinois Web site.

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

PUBLIC AFFAIRS
SECTION
AMERICAN EMBASSY

P.O.Box 1014
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia

Phone: 251-1-174007
251-1-174000

Fax: 251-1-242454

Email: pasaddis@state.gov



Sesame Street Educates and Entertains Internationally . . .

(Continued from page 14)

Noodle" (a human mime character) and "Elmo Has a Question for YOU" (teaches counting). Elmo was an honored attendee at President Bill Clinton's second inauguration in 1997.

Sesame Street continues to evolve. The current season, the show's 36th, introduces the Healthy Habits for Life initiative described by one of its architects as "teaching children the importance of their bodies and how to keep them healthy." Youngsters learn about nutrition, how to keep their bodies clean and the importance of getting enough rest.

But mostly Sesame Street is about fun. Musical numbers like "'C' is for

Cookie," "Rubber Duckie" (which reached Number 16 on the pop music charts in 1970) and It's Not Easy Being Green are part of a common experience shared by the nearly 75 million Americans who have grown up watching the show.

Even the secretary-general suggests that world leaders could learn much from Sesame Street. "Elmo and his friends ... tell it straight," he said.

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

Charles Taylor's Arrest "Great Moment" for International Justice . . .

(Continued from page 6)

That means "going ... after those who started this, aided it, abetted it, continued it and created the conditions by which other individuals were able to murder, rape, maim, mutilate, pillage, plunder, slave, etc.," he said.

Crane was appointed special prosecutor in April 2002 and said he expects the court to complete its work in 2007.

Currently, there are three joint criminal trials in Freetown, Sierra Leone, he said, against the leadership of the Civil Defense Force, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council.

With regard to Taylor, Crane said, "Our plan was to roll him up with the joint criminal indictment

with the RUF, but that did not take place."

Certainly, he said, much of the same evidence gathered in the RUF trial can be used against Taylor.

Crane called Taylor the "centerpoint of a 10-year geopolitical plan" that Libya's Muammar al-Qadhafi started in the late 1980s to recruit individuals to move south, foment rebellion and eventually take over their countries and become "surrogates for Libyan leader Muammar al-Qadhafi so he could do whatever he wanted to do with West Africa."

"We have clear evidence of this," Crane said. Those recruited by al-Qadhafi included RUF rebel leader Foday Sankoh; Blaise Campaore, the current president of Burkina

Faso; and diamond merchant Ibrahim Bah, he added.

The result of this joint criminal exercise "was the murder, rape, maiming and mutilation of 500,000 people in Sierra Leone and about 600,000 in Liberia," Crane charged.

JUSTICE FOR LIBERIANS

Crane said a hybrid international war crimes tribunal should be considered for Liberia. "We cannot walk away from 600,000 human beings. The ultimate atrocity in my mind is that we don't do something and that these people go quietly into the night and that there is no record of their horrible deaths."

For information on U.S. policy in the region, see Africa (<http://usinfo.state.gov/af/>). ♦